

# The Silent Ones

Jauvanta Young



They poke their heads through the doorways,  
the silent ones.  
They look at the same thing and see it come out X  
where their neighbors see it Y -----  
X being an entity unknown to be continued  
in the next grade in grammar-school when you get there  
*if you do . . . don't worry now-----*  
And their eyes go wide looking at the first paragraphs  
of the prize-winning selection for the Best Novel  
of the Year,  
When someone says: how well that is done—how plain.  
see here the author shows the inside conflict,  
there the force, the slow growth of a numbed defeat.  
and all so compact.  
so life-in-the-raw-condensed on page-4.

Their eyes go wide at the words on paper.  
over and over see only the words typed down.  
eyes stencil the words:

*John walked toward the cat-whiskered house  
cream-yellow behind . . . geraniums . . .  
with the look of a man going backwards . . .  
slammed the porch screen . . .*

The silent eyes slide sideways, unceasing slide back:

. . . raised the monkey-pawed knocker  
 . . . and in a quick blind movement  
 . . . let go and turned in the instant  
 The knocker . . .  
     half-arc'd . . .  
         functionless . . .  
             you know . . .

The silent ones nod: how well done—how plain.  
     back at the know-it-all someone  
     standing there seeing too much  
 And buy the Best Novel  
     to have it sitting on their shelves in a bright paper cover  
     with three leaves in abstract design on the margin  
     do you care for lemon.

The quiet ones hustling together  
     step on their own shoelaces,  
     try to feel gershwin in the rinds of their minds  
     when the someone begins to murmur of the earth-feel  
     the scattering pulse beat the surface-and-the-depth  
     the countered rhythms  
     and looks sad.

The silent ones get confused on thurber,  
     start drinking more coffee  
     and shift the conversations.

They say it angrily:  
     he talks over our heads.  
     we never understand——what he wants . . .  
     i wish i knew him.

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there are at least two possible ways in which the “well-rounded” person or  
 personality can develop—as the hollow bubble or as the closed sphere.

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“And the bursting of shells had frayed everyone’s nerves,  
 All shimmered as in a mirage. . . .”

—Meredith Jones